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### Books for All

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# Books for All

Article for Special Children

## Books for Who?

‘Susan’ is in third year of secondary school and has a visual impairment. She can use a low vision aid but prefers to read books printed in 24 point text. Staff in the local authority Transcription Unit create accessible versions of textbooks and other learning materials, either by scanning the original into the computer and then editing it, or by typing the text into the word processor directly.

‘Will’ started at his local secondary school last year. He has cerebral palsy, which affects his mobility (he drives an electric wheelchair) and motor control. He can’t hold books or turn pages, and so an assistant at his school scans books into the computer so that he can ‘turn the page’ by pressing a key on his laptop.

‘Simon’ is in primary 7 and has dyslexia. His reading is very poor, but his oral comprehension is good. A support for learning teacher scans textbooks into the computer so that he can read them with a text-to-speech program.

Up until April this year, in one of these three scenarios staff were breaking the law by scanning textbooks into the computer. Which one?

## DDA and copyright

The answer is the teacher in the primary school.

The reason is that the school’s photocopying licence allowed the school to “*make and supply to any visually impaired Authorised Person*” a copy of a book “*in any alternative format that is more accessible... whether in digital or audio format, large or small print copies*”<sup>i</sup>.

So who is a ‘visually impaired’ person? Well according to s.31F (9) of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 as amended by the Copyright (Visually Impaired Persons) Act 2002<sup>ii</sup>, it’s a pupil:

- *who is blind;*
- *who has an impairment of visual function which cannot be improved, by the use of corrective lenses, to a level that would normally be acceptable for reading without a special level or kind of light;*
- *who is unable, through physical disability, to hold or manipulate a book; or*
- *who is unable, through physical disability, to focus or move his eyes to the extent that would normally be acceptable for reading.”*

Dyslexic pupils, those with learning disabilities, hearing impairment or those with Autism or Asberger’s Syndrome are not listed and so staff could not scan, or adapt or make an accessible copy for these pupils unless they got permission from the publisher or rightsholder first.

The Scottish Government says that “*Responsible bodies should ensure that any information that is important to enable pupils to learn or to be able to participate in school activities can be provided in an alternative form if the pupil may have difficulty reading information provided in standard written form*” in order to meet duties under the Disability Discrimination Act<sup>iii</sup>.

So schools and local authorities are expected to make accessible versions of textbooks and other school materials under the DDA, yet copyright prevents them from doing so, unless the pupil has a visual or physical impairment.

Clearly this is not fair or reasonable, but the good news is that as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008, the Schools’ photocopying licence has been changed: instead of allowing books to be made in alternative formats for only those pupils with sight loss or physical disability, the new licence now also covers pupils who are “otherwise disabled”<sup>iv</sup>.

In Scotland, the new licence was announced in the Scottish Parliament by Adam Ingram, Minister for Children and Early Years, who said "This is a fantastic achievement which will benefit a large number of pupils with a range of needs, including those with dyslexia. It is essential that all young people meet their full potential and that schools play their role in this by providing all pupils with accessible curriculum materials."<sup>v</sup> Although the new licence came about partly as a result of discussions between the Scottish Government and the Copyright Licensing Agency, the new terms apply across the whole of the UK.

These few words in the new licence have got massive implications and huge potential for improving the education of pupils with disabilities in the UK, and in this article we’ll explore why this is the case.

## **Who needs Books for All?**

CALL Scotland is a research and service unit within the Moray House Faculty of Education at the University of Edinburgh. In 2006 the Scottish Government commissioned CALL to investigate which pupils might benefit from books and other learning materials in alternative, accessible formats. The commission was to some extent stimulated by lobbying by RNIB Scotland for a national transcription service to be set up to produce accessible books for visually impaired pupils. The Government wanted to find out if other disabled pupils, in addition to those with a visual impairment, needed books in alternative formats. The Books for All report<sup>vi</sup> was published in June 2007, and drew together a wide range of evidence on the numbers of ‘print-disabled’ pupils; their literacy support needs; what alternative formats were needed; and of course, copyright and other legislation.

The Books for All report identifies a wide range of pupils who may have problems accessing standard printed material in schools because they have difficulty seeing; reading; understanding; or finding text; or difficulty holding books and turning pages; or writing and recording. We deliberately focussed on literacy support needs and what can be done to address these needs, rather than on the disability that may have given rise to the pupils’ difficulties with literacy, because pupils with different disability may benefit from materials in the same alternative format, and conversely pupils with the same impairment may need materials in quite different formats. We will illustrate this with some examples. Although we

use statistics from Scotland in this article, the percentages (e.g. of pupils with one particular impairment) are likely to be similar across the whole of the UK. Multiply the numbers by 10 and you'll get the approximate numbers of pupils in England and Wales.

## ***Pupils with Visual Impairment***

Pupils with visual impairment may need books in various sizes of Large Print; Braille or Moon; or audio. Pupils may also benefit from materials in digital format whereby the text can be magnified on screen, or spoken out using text-to-speech software. In terms of Large Print, there is no 'one size fits all' – transcription services often produce bespoke Large Print materials for individual pupils who might need anything between, say 14 point and 36 point text, with corresponding re-sizing (or removal) of illustrations.



A range of Large Print, Braille and audio materials produced by the Edinburgh and Lothians Visiting Teachers Support Service.

According to Scottish Government statistics<sup>vii</sup>, around 5% of pupils in Scotland (34,680) pupils aged 5-18 have some form of support plan in place (either a Record of Needs or an IEP) as a result of disability or impairment. Of this group, a minority - 503 (1.5% of the 34,680) - have a significant visual impairment as the main barrier to learning.

RNIB Scotland estimate that there are 1,100 pupils in Scotland with a visual impairment, and the main reason for the difference, we think, is because the Government statistics report the main difficulty in learning and the other 600 or so of the 1,100 are likely to be reported as having a physical, learning or other impairment as their main difficulty. Large Print or Braille

may not be of much use to these pupils because they can't read Braille, may have difficulty turning pages, or have difficulty understanding text regardless of its size.

Another useful indicator of need is the number of requests for Assessment Arrangements for pupils sitting Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) examinations. 7% (10,650 pupils) of candidates in 2006 used some sort of arrangement (i.e. extra time, reader/scribe, exam paper in different font, etc) and of this group, those with a visual impairment numbered 302 (3% of the 10,377) (Books for All, p. 41).

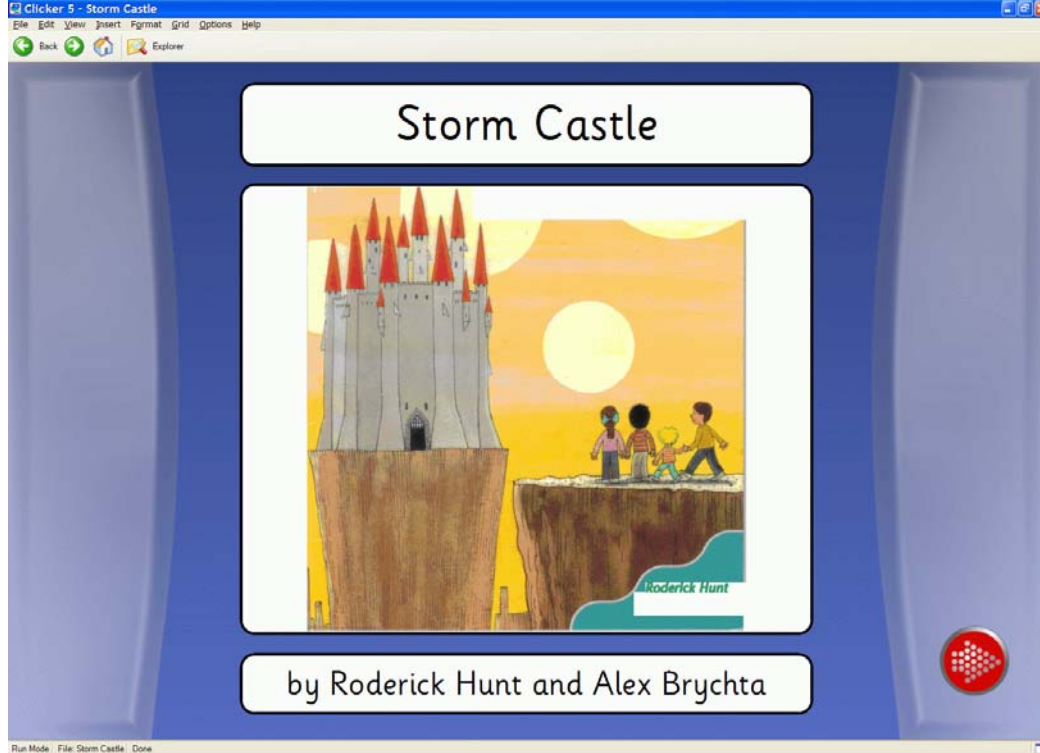
When we looked supply of materials in alternative format, we found that “availability of books and other resources in Braille, Large Print and audio formats, for the relatively small number of blind and partially-sighted pupils, while not complete, is good, in comparison to the availability of accessible books for the much larger number of pupils with physical disabilities, specific learning difficulties, learning difficulties, or hearing impairment.” (Books for All, p. i).

There are several reasons for this. One is that local authorities in Scotland are obliged to employ teachers with specialist qualifications for pupils with visual or hearing impairment, and many also have their own transcription teams producing Large Print, Braille or audio for pupils with visual difficulties. Charities such as RNIB and Calibre also provide transcription services and lending libraries. The Revealweb database (which has now been incorporated into the RNIB Library Catalogue) listed over 110,00 titles in alternative formats, from 146 suppliers, and most of the titles were Large Print, Braille or audio.

This is not to say that the print needs of visually impaired pupils are fully met: far from it. RNIB research found that ‘92% of all respondents “frequently” or “quite often” experience difficulties in obtaining large print books from external providers’<sup>viii</sup> and many pupils with visual difficulties have to wait weeks to get a book in the format they can read. RNIB are continuing, rightly, to press publishers and Government to address this issue.

## ***Pupils with Physical Disabilities***

Pupils with physical disabilities may benefit from digital books to that they can ‘turn the page’ by pressing a key or a switch; or audio books (provided the audio player is physically accessible). This group numbers 1,298 (3.8%) of the 34,577 pupils with a Record of Needs or an IEP. In terms of examinations, 412 candidates out of 10,650 required help in an examination in 2006.



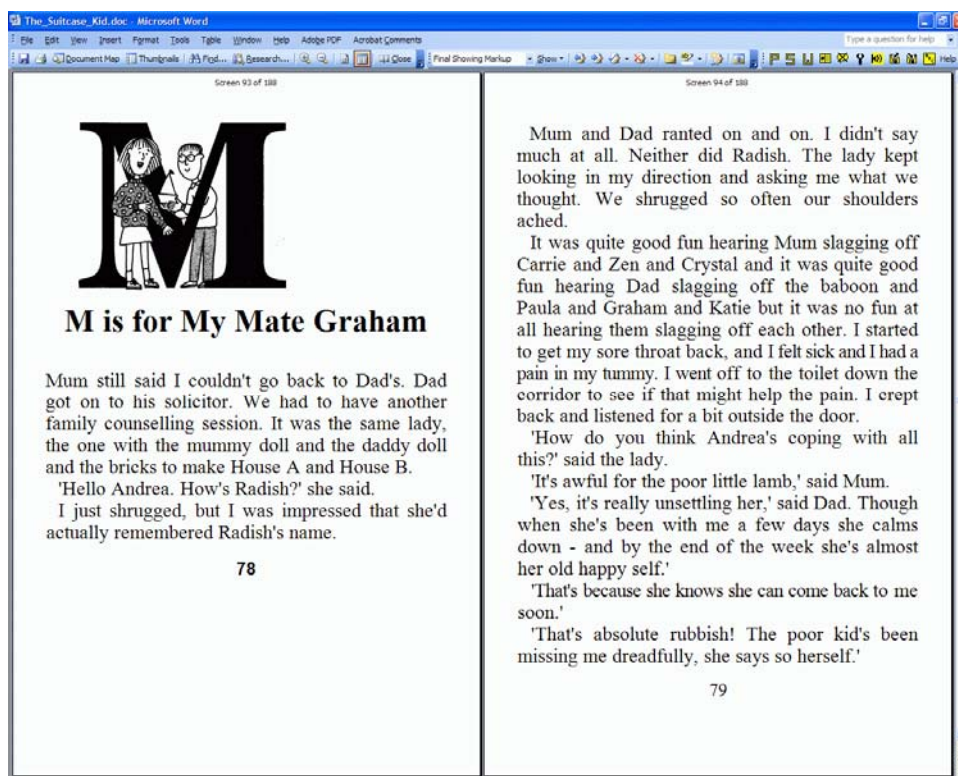
An Oxford Reading Tree book in Clicker 5, accessed by mouse, keyboard or switch

Even though there are more pupils with a physical disability than there are with a visual impairment, availability of alternative format books for this group is almost non-existent – despite the fact that the copyright law allows accessible copies to be made for these pupils on the same basis as it allows Large Print, Braille and audio books to be made for pupils with sight loss. Accessible books are made by individual staff in some schools, but there are no local authority services, or national organisations like RNIB providing accessible books for these pupils. The only charity supplying copyrighted electronic books for both visually and physically impaired people that we could find was The Seeing Ear (<http://www.seeingear.org/>). (There are many sources of electronic texts of books that are out of copyright, such as Project Gutenberg, <http://www.gutenberg.org/>.)

### ***Pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties including dyslexia***

Pupils with specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia, may need Adapted Print (a different font; on coloured paper); audio books; or digital books for reading with text-to-speech software. The Scottish Government statistics identify 7,232 pupils (20.9% of 34,577) with a specific learning difficulty but it is likely that there another 25,000 or so pupils with severe dyslexia who have not been identified. There were 6,995 (66% of 10,650) candidates with specific learning difficulties who needed support in SQA exams in 2006.





The Suitcase Kid, by Jacqueline Wilson, scanned into Word and read out using WordTalk.

Provision of materials in accessible formats for this group of pupils is very ad-hoc. The copyright law does not allow books to be adapted which means that a school can legally make an audio book, for example, for a blind pupil, but cannot give exactly the same book to a dyslexic pupil unless permission is given by the rightsholder first. As a result, in some schools pupils will have access to accessible versions of some books if the staff have been able to contact the publishers, get permission, and create the accessible copy, but in many schools this does not happen and pupils cannot access the learning materials independently. Furthermore, when publishers do give permission, it is usually for the book to be adapted for a named pupil: schools cannot share accessible books, which means there is a huge duplication of effort as schools ask permission to create the *same* accessible versions of the *same* book. Clearly this is nuts.

Another consequence of lack of access (apart from the obvious impact on a pupil's education) is that very large numbers of staff are employed reading to pupils. If pupils had access to learning materials in a format that they could read themselves it would help them learn more effectively and independently and they would need less help from staff.

### ***Pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties***

Pupils with general learning difficulties may benefit from texts in Adapted Print, from books with symbol support, from digital books with text-to-speech software, or from audio books. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties are the largest group identified in Scottish Government statistics: 7,374 pupils out of 34,577. These pupils are less likely to sit examinations, with 878 candidates requesting support (although this is still almost three times the number of pupils with a visual impairment).

Provision of accessible learning materials for pupils with moderate learning difficulties is very ad-hoc and again, relies on school staff to take it upon themselves to request permission from publisher to adapt books, and then find time and resources to make the books.

## **How can we provide Books for All?**

So far, so unsatisfactory. What can we do to improve matters? In the Books for All report, we identified a number of actions:

### **Copyright**

We argued that '*copyright law appears to be at odds with all other aspects of Disability Discrimination*' but since changing the law would require legislation, we suggested approaching the Copyright Licensing Agency (CLA) to amend the existing schools licences so that accessible copies of books could be made for any disabled pupil. (There was already a precedent for this – the CLA FE/HE licence from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2007 applied to any disabled student, not just those with a visual or physical impairment.) Happily, CLA agreed and as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008, the permission to make accessible copies applies to all disabled pupils.

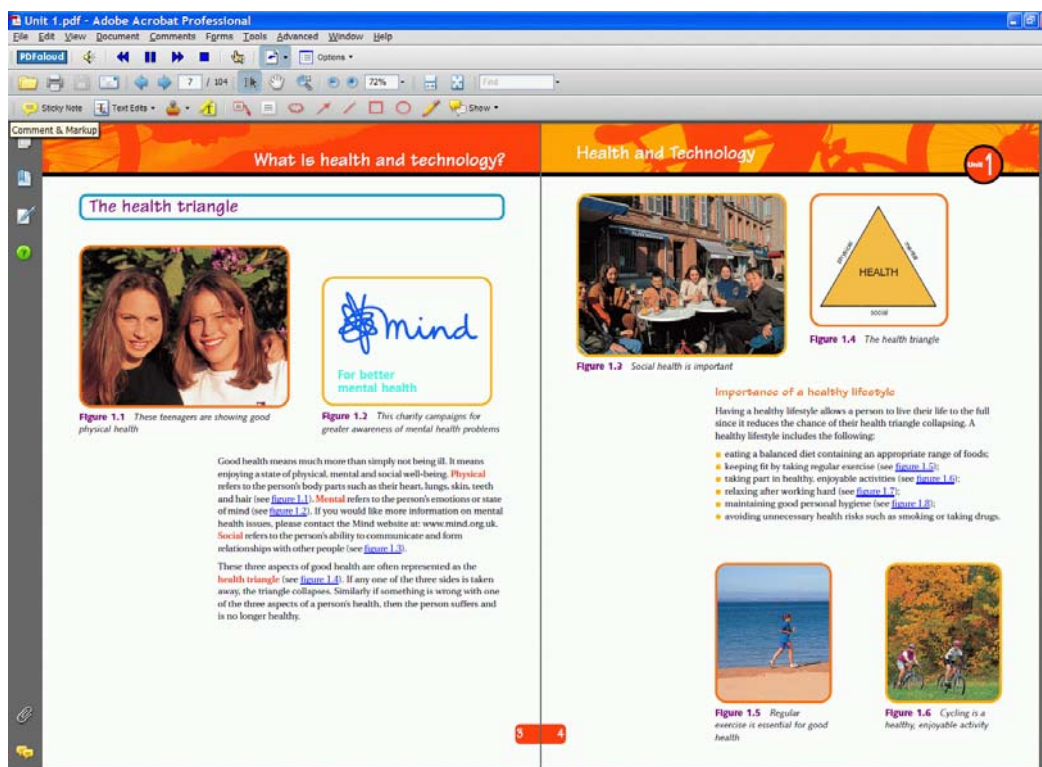
### **Supply**

Now that schools and local authorities can legally make accessible copies of books, there needs to be a mechanism for sharing materials both to meet the terms of the CLA licence (you are obliged to check to see if an accessible copy exists before making your own) and also to reduce the chronic waste of time and resources whereby schools make the same copy of the same book. In Scotland, the Minister announced the Scottish Books for All Database which '*will contain a list of adapted materials and where they are being held*'. The database was piloted in June and it is hoped that it will be rolled out to schools in August 2008.

In England and Wales, the Department for Children, Schools and Families will pilot a project 'to make textbooks accessible to children who can't read due to visual impairment or dyslexia'<sup>ix</sup>. The pilot project will involve RNIB and the publishing industry to explore how textbooks can be sourced, adapted and distributed.

One of the bottlenecks in the supply chain is lack of access to a suitable electronic version of the book, which means that schools and providers of alternative formats often have to scan the paper original into the computer, which is slow and in principle completely unnecessary given that virtually all books are now created digitally. Another very useful development is therefore Publisher Lookup UK<sup>x</sup>, a web site developed by JISC TechDis and the Publishers Association. The site aims to help educationalists who want to source electronic formats of textbooks for students with disabilities, and to help publishers deal with requests efficiently. Publishers may not be able to provide digital copies of all their books – older titles may not exist electronically – but the site does list contacts in 132 academic publishers.





Biology textbook supplied as a PDF by Hodder Gibson. A physically disabled pupil can navigate the text and turn the page using the keyboard or mouse; while those with visual or reading difficulties can have it read out by the computer using the built-in Acrobat Read OutLoud tool, or a text-to-speech program like PDFaloud.

## Access

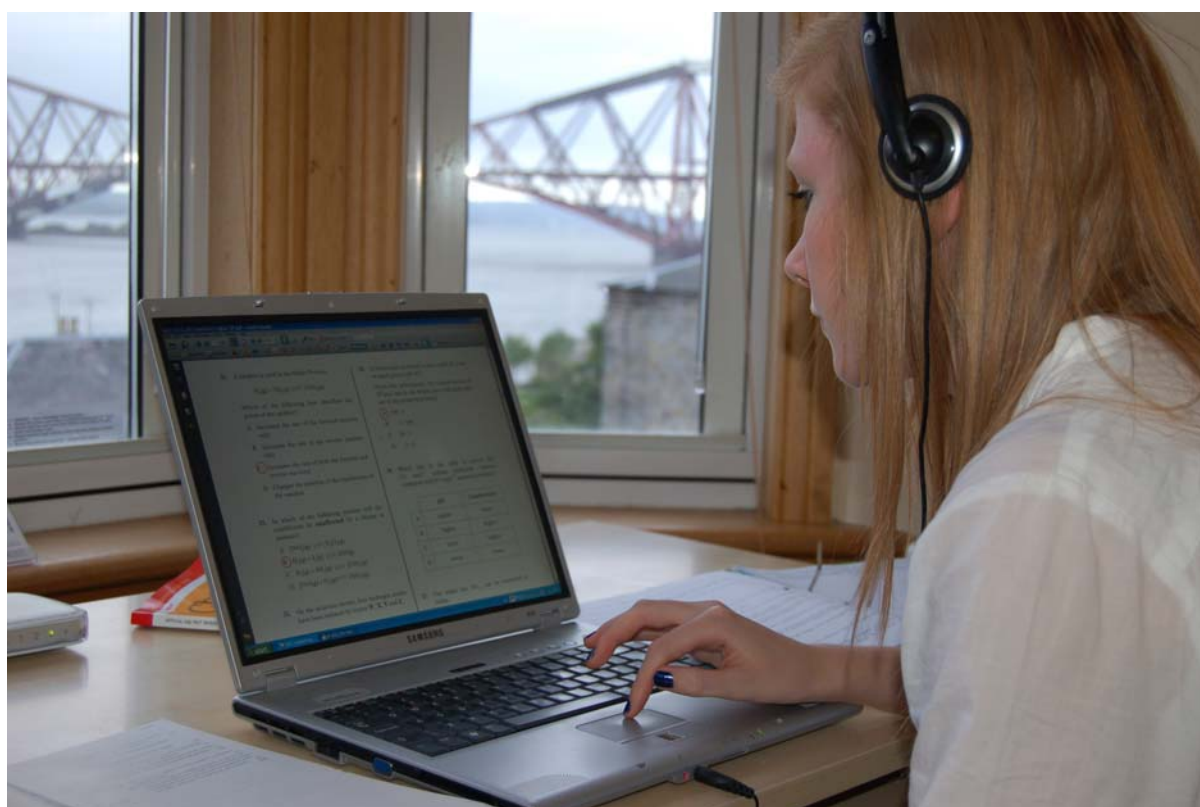
The concept of books in Braille, Large Print and audio for visually impaired pupils is generally accepted, and provision of materials while not complete, does exist. In contrast, many staff, pupils and parents are not aware of the range of alternative formats that could offer independent access for other groups of non-readers. There is therefore a huge need for awareness-raising amongst education professionals and the general public. There is also a need to look at how pupils can access books in alternative formats, once these are made available.

Different needs require different formats: there is no single printed, audio or digital format that meets all needs. Currently, many publishers can provide digital books in PDF which can be accessible for many pupils with reading or physical difficulties, but PDF is often less accessible for those with severe visual impairment. The DCSF pilot project mentioned above will be looking at ways in which publishers can provide digital files that can be easily converted into a number of different print, audio and digital formats to suit the needs of the pupil and we will also endeavour to do the same through the Scottish Books for All Database.

Digital formats offer a cost-effective and accessible option for many pupils provided that pupils have access to computers with suitable software. For example, WordTalk, an award-winning text-to-speech reader for Microsoft Word, developed by Rod Macaulay, is available free from [www.wordtalk.org.uk](http://www.wordtalk.org.uk). One of the common complaints about text-to-speech programs on computers is the quality of the computer voice, and so another recent

development in Scotland is a high quality voice with a Scottish accent, which can be downloaded free of charge by schools and pupils from [www.thescottishvoice.org.uk](http://www.thescottishvoice.org.uk).

Even if the software is free, to read digital books you need a computer, which costs money, which is in short supply. A rejoinder to this objection is to consider the potential for savings in terms of staffing. In 2006, there were requests to use scribes in 15,059 SQA exam entries (about 30,000 individual exam papers), whereas there were only 3,063 requests to use ICT. A year later, when CALL and SQA trialled digital exam papers in twelve schools, more pupils used digital papers or ICT than scribes. If we can roll this technology out across Scotland (and the UK), then thousands of pupils will be able to sit exams independently using ICT and therefore rely less on expensive human support.



Pupil studying an SQA past paper with PDFaloud and the Scottish Voice

## **‘If I can’t read it, I can’t learn it’**

Pupils sit formal examinations towards the end of their schooling. If they need help to read the exam paper and write answers, then presumably they also need help reading textbooks and writing in class. RNIB Scotland summed this up with the statement: “If I can’t read it, I can’t learn it”<sup>xi</sup>. This was coined to apply to pupils with visual impairment, but as we have seen it applies to a much wider and larger number of pupils who are, for one reason and another ‘print disabled’.

It also applies to pupils who have literacy difficulties but who are not disabled. The Rose Review notes that 16% of children do not reach the target level for reading at the end of Key Stage 2<sup>xii</sup>. Better teaching will address this issue, but providing learning materials in alternative formats, such as in digital form on a computer, or in audio on an iPod, may also help to engage reluctant readers and learners. Books for All is not therefore just about

learning materials for pupils with disabilities – it's about providing better access to the curriculum for any pupil who might benefit from new (and old) literacy formats.

The recent change in copyright licensing is a first step towards providing Books for All, at least for those who are print-disabled. We can now legally create and share accessible books for all disabled pupils, not just those with a visual impairment – so let's get on with it.

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<sup>i</sup> Copyright Licensing Agency (2007) Schools Photocopying Licence, [http://www.cla.co.uk/Schools\\_licences.php](http://www.cla.co.uk/Schools_licences.php)

<sup>ii</sup> Copyright (Visually Impaired Persons) Act 2002  
[http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020033\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2002/ukpga_20020033_en_1)

<sup>iii</sup> Scottish Executive (2002) Planning to Improve Access to Education for Pupils with Disabilities; Guidance On Preparing Accessibility Strategies. ISBN 7559 10230  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/education/gpas-00.asp>

<sup>iv</sup> Copyright Licensing Agency (2008) The CLA Schools Photocopying and Scanning Licence. [http://www.cla.co.uk/Schools\\_licences.php](http://www.cla.co.uk/Schools_licences.php)

<sup>v</sup> Scottish Government (2008) Better access to learning resources.  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2008/05/09141804>.

<sup>vi</sup> Nisbet, P.D. & Aitken, S (2007) Books for All: Accessible Curriculum Materials for Pupils with Additional Support Needs. Report to Scottish Executive Education Department.  
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<sup>vii</sup> Scottish Executive (2006) Statistical Bulletin Education Series Edn/B1/2006/1 Feb. 2006.  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/2006/02/28083932/0>

<sup>viii</sup> RNIB (2006) Where's my book? Tackling the textbook deficit faced by school pupils with sight loss. RNIB, London. [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

<sup>ix</sup> DCSF 2008 New help for children with visual and hearing impairments.  
[http://www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn\\_id=2008\\_0087](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2008_0087)

<sup>x</sup> Publisher Lookup UK. <http://www.publisherlookup.org.uk/>

<sup>xi</sup> RNIB Scotland If I can't read it, I can't learn it. RNIB Scotland, Edinburgh.

<sup>xii</sup> Rose J. (2006) Independent review of the teaching of early reading,  
<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/phonics/report.pdf>